

In the Specification:

Please substitute the following paragraphs for the corresponding paragraphs beginning at the indicated location in the specification as originally filed.

(Page 6, lines 10+) In order to accomplish these and other objects of the invention, a method of combining results of a plurality of feature discriminating techniques applied to an article and a sequential selective processing apparatus employing the same are provided wherein the method includes steps of validating ~~one of either~~ either a result of a first feature discrimination technique ~~and or~~ or a result of a second discrimination technique when the results of the respective feature discrimination techniques correspond to each other, validating or rejecting a result of the first feature discrimination technique against expected or permitted values, validating or rejecting a result of the second feature discrimination technique against expected or permitted values, and outputting a validated result for control of a sequential selective process while rejecting only articles where neither of the results of the first or second feature description techniques is validated.

REMARKS

Claims 1-20 remain active in this application. The specification has been reviewed and editorial revisions made where seen to be appropriate and as noted by the Examiner. Dependency of claims 12 and 14 have been amended. Minor editorial revisions have been made on page 6 and in the Abstract. No new matter has been introduced into the application.

The Examiner has objected to the abstract and to the dependency of claims 12 and 14. These objections are respectfully traversed as moot in view of the above amendments in which the Examiner's suggestions have been adopted.

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-20 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Baker et al. This ground of rejection is respectfully traversed particularly since it does not respond to the actual claim language. It is also noted for the record that the statement of the rejection of claims in light of prior art reference address apparatus claims 11-18 only, but does not explicitly address the method claims, 1-10.

Substantively, the Examiner asserts that the applicant is claiming a processing apparatus and method with a "means for outputting a validated value for control of a sequential selective process while rejecting only articles when *either* of said results is validated" (emphasis added). However, claims 1 and 11, from which all other claims depend, recite: "outputting a validated result" (as in claim 1), or "a means for outputting a validated value" (as in claim 11), "for control of a sequential selective process while rejecting only articles where *neither* of said results is validated" (emphasis added) and thus does not respond to the actual recitation of the claims. Moreover, the Examiner's assertion is utterly illogical

since it literally calls for rejection of articles when data has, in fact, been validated.

More specifically, the invention is directed to reducing the number of articles which are rejected in an automated sortation process. As noted at page 4, lines 7+, of the present specification, rejection rates as high as 40% are common for mixed mail using both OCR and BCR processes. This rejection rate is greater than the rejection rate for either the OCR or BCR process alone and the excess rejection rate derives from articles where the OCR result and the BCR result do not correspond with each other. The invention approaches this problem by performing validation when the first feature discrimination technique (e.g. OCR) and the second feature discrimination technique (e.g. BCR) do, in fact, correspond. Then, each of the first feature discrimination technique results and the second feature discrimination technique results are individually matched against a separate source of data ("expected or permitted values") and validated if a match is found. An output is provided to control sortation based on validated data (preferably that which is deemed most reliable by validation of a selected one of the results when the results match (page 13, lines 13+ of the specification)) and an article is rejected only where none of these three processes result in validation ("where neither of said results is validated" - emphasis added). In sharp contrast, if the Examiner's observations concerning Baker et al. were correct, rejection rates would be not only increased, but any article not rejected would be sorted based on results which could not be validated; guaranteeing a 100% error rate. In fact, the teachings of Baker are, at best, of no greater relevance to the invention, as claimed than the acknowledged prior art and do not achieve the meritorious effects of the invention in reducing the article rejection rate.

Further, the Examiner's reading of other claim recitations on Baker et al. are similarly non-responsive to the actual recitations of the claims. In particular, the Examiner first asserts that the applicant provides a "means for validating one of a result of a first feature discrimination technique (i.e. determining the characters the destination address on the face of a mail piece from its image) and a result of a second discrimination technique when said results correspond to each other (i.e. evaluating bar code readability)" (emphasis added). An evaluation of readability is not the same as or equivalent to the results of bar code reading as recited since the latter result is data that can be compared with data derived from the first technique. In other words, the parenthetical expression does not correspond to the claim language even as paraphrased. More substantively, however, while Baker et al. may teach this claimed feature (although not in the manner asserted by the Examiner), comparison of OCR results with BCR results is not only admitted prior art but the source of excess article rejection which the invention seeks to correct through the following two recited steps or elements, as to which the Examiner is similarly in error.

Specifically, the Examiner next asserts that Baker et al. teaches a "means for validating a result of said first feature discrimination technique against expected or permitted values (i.e., performing an OCR process within predetermined amount of time slot)." It is respectfully submitted that the Examiner's understanding that the reference's disclosure of performing an OCR process within a predetermined time slot is not relevant to the applicants procedure of feature discrimination in regard to expected or permitted values (i.e. data). The applicant's method and apparatus as declared in claims 1 and 11,

respectively, do not deal with issues of time, rather, content in the form of data resulting from the process.

Further still, the Examiner asserts that Baker et al. teaches a "means for validating a result of said second feature discrimination technique against expected or permitted values (i.e., evaluating bar code readability by comparing the bar code image to the bar code requirements data). This assertion by the Examiner not only appears to rely on the same passage of Baker (column 5, lines 25+) which was applied to the recitation of comparison of OCR and BCR results discussed above, but again erroneously asserts that a determination of readability (or not) is the same as or equivalent to a comparison of data "values" which it is not and, further, does not respond to the language "permitted or expected values" (plural, e.g. a list of existing addresses).

Accordingly, it is seen that the Examiner's statement of the rejection does not demonstrate how Baker et al. answers any recitation of claim 1 or 11 and thus does not make a *prima facie* demonstration of anticipation of any claim in the application. Since, as to claims 1-18, recitation of claims 1 and 11 were the only recitations specifically addressed and the passage cited in support of the inclusion of claims 19-20 is directed to the marking of rejected articles rather than the subject matter actually recited, a *prima facie* case has not been made, and the rejection of these claims is clearly in error. Additionally, claims 2-10 and 12-20 are distinguished from Baker et al. through the recitations respectively contained therein which the Examiner has not addressed as well as through the allowability of independent claims 1 and 11.

In view of the foregoing, the rejection of claims 1-10, 11-18, 19, and 20 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) is clearly in error since, as discussed above, the

rejection does not respond to the actual claim language cited by the Examiner of even the independent claims 1 and 11 and no *prima facie* demonstration of any claim has been made. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Since all rejections, objections and requirements contained in the outstanding official action have been fully answered and shown to be in error and/or inapplicable to the present claims, it is respectfully submitted that reconsideration is now in order under the provisions of 37 C.F.R. §1.111(b) and such reconsideration is respectfully requested. Upon reconsideration, it is also respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance and such action is therefore respectfully requested.

If an extension of time is required for this response to be considered as being timely filed, a conditional petition is hereby made for such extension of time. Please charge any deficiencies in fees and credit any overpayment of fees to Attorney's Deposit Account No. 50-2041.

Respectfully submitted,



Marshall M. Curtis
Reg. No. 33,138

Whitham, Curtis & Christofferson, P. C.
11491 Sunset Hills Road, Suite 340
Reston, Virginia 20190

Customer Number: **30743**
(703) 787-9400